

PALM CENTER

BLUEPRINTS FOR SOUND PUBLIC POLICY

2020 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE POSITIONS ON TRANSGENDER MILITARY SERVICE

This document contains statements that the 2020 presidential candidates have made about their positions on military service by openly transgender Americans, which the Trump administration has banned since April 12, 2019. It includes statements that candidates made either in writing, as reported by a news outlet, or directly to the Palm Center if they had no public position. (Those who had no public position and did not reply to inquiries are not listed.) We list Democrats followed by Republicans and then Libertarians. The document is updated regularly.

DEMOCRATS

Joe Biden

“It’s simple: every American who is qualified to serve, should be able to — and we should all be grateful for their service and courage. ... On day one of my presidency, I will direct the Department of Defense to allow transgender service members to serve openly and free from discrimination. I know that this is not just the right thing to do, but it’s in our national interest.”

- [Feb. 29, 2020, Dallas Voice](#)

“If I were president, you would not have to choose [between serving your country and identifying as transgender] ... Transgender men and women are in a position where they should be able to do anything anybody else in the world can do. There should be no difference.”

- Oct. 10, 2019, LGBTQ Presidential Candidate Forum, Los Angeles

Called the transgender ban “wrong” and “immoral.”

- [Jun. 2, 2019, Associated Press report](#)

Tulsi Gabbard

“[My record and commitment include] calling for an end to the trans ban in our military.”

- Sep. 20, 2019, LGBTQ Presidential Candidate Forum, Iowa

“The only qualifications that should matter for those who want to serve is a commitment to uphold the Constitution, defend our country, and be capable and qualified to carry out their duties. [The transgender] ban dishonors the thousands of transgender Americans who currently serve in the military. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, not kicked out of the military.”

(Gabbard, continued)

- [Jul. 26, 2019, press statement on congressional webpage](#)

“I’ve served w/ LGBTQ service members. I know they would give their life for me & I would give my life for them. It is this commitment that I will carry through as POTUS, because there are people who still face discrimination.”

- [Jun. 26, 2019, Twitter](#)

Bernie Sanders

“In announcing a ban on transgender people in the military, the Trump administration has shown once again that it is on the wrong side of history. There is a reason the administration has not provided any scientific evidence to justify this policy: there is no justification for this sort of discrimination. Transgender people have served and continue to serve our country honorably in the military. Unfortunately, this administration is not treating them honorably. ... As president, Bernie will immediately repeal the Trump administration’s bigoted ban on transgender people from serving in the U.S. military.”

- [Nov. 18, 2019, Military Times Questionnaire](#)

“Incredibly, it is still legal to deny someone housing or service in the military for being transgender. That is unacceptable and must change. We must end discrimination in all forms.”

- [Bernie Sanders campaign website](#)

REPUBLICANS

Donald Trump

“[Transgender people] take massive amounts of drugs, they have to. You're not allowed to take drugs, you're in the military you're not allowed to take any drugs. And they have to after the operation, they have to, they have no choice, they have to. You would actually have to break rules and regulations in order to have that.”

- [Jun. 5, 2019, Good Morning Britain interview](#)

“After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military. Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

- [Jul. 26, 2017, Twitter](#)

Bill Weld

“Weld wants to protect LGBTQ rights and reverse the Trump administration’s decision to ban transgender troops from the military.”

- [Sep. 11, 2019, Sentinel Source news report](#)

LIBERTARIANS

Max Abramson

“I don’t believe in political interference in how our military operates. However, I expect our military leaders to continue the long tradition of letting the private sector make changes first, and then follow behind.”

- Oct. 12, 2019, statement provided to the Palm Center by the Abramson campaign

Ken Armstrong

“While some transgendered people are going through medical treatments (which is a disqualifier of all types of people), it is my opinion that everyone who meets the physical and aptitude qualifications is eligible for military service.”

- Oct. 14, 2019, statement provided to the Palm Center by the Armstrong campaign

Dan Behrman

“I absolutely would overturn the ban, and I think that all people should be treated equally. I am a huge supporter of LGBTQ rights and I am very open about this.”

- Oct. 10, 2019, statement provided to the Palm Center by the Behrman campaign

Adam Kokesh

“I do not intend to overturn the ban, but rather extend it to every American equally.”

- Oct. 15, 2019, statement provided to the Palm Center by the Kokesh campaign

Kimberly Ruff

“Absolutely, [I would lift the ban]. Transgender rights are human rights.”

- Oct. 11, 2019, statement provided to the Palm Center by the Ruff campaign